Sustaining Cooperative Weed Management Areas in the Long-Term

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Photo: Newark/ Long Valley CWMA
Cooperative Weed Management Area

A local organization that:

• integrates all noxious weed management resources

• across jurisdictional boundaries

• to benefit entire communities.
A Recipe for Success
Idaho Noxious Weed Coordinating Committee
2005

R. VanBebber
CWMA Cookbook: A Recipe for Success

A Step-by-Step Guide on How to Develop a Cooperative Weed Management Area in the Eastern United States

MIPN.org Midwest Invasive Plant Network
Five characteristics of a CWMA

- Defined geographical area
- Involvement or representation of the majority of landowners and natural resource managers
- Steering committee
- Commitment to cooperate
- Comprehensive plan for the management/prevention of one or more noxious weeds or invasive plants
Distribution of CWMAs in the United States (301 total)

http://www.invasiveplantcenters.org/cwmamap.cfm
CWMAs have different names:

- Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISMs)
- Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMAs)
- Resource management teams
- Invasive task force
- Early detection network
- Etc.
Potential benefits of CWMAs

- Facilitate cooperation among federal, state, county, and private land owners and managers
- Allow sharing of resources across jurisdictional boundaries
- Pool talents, knowledge, skills, resources
- Increase communication and public awareness
- **Funding opportunities**
### Group Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Mean Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weed control</td>
<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention of weed spread</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventory &amp; mapping</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination of efforts</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising awareness</td>
<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and outreach</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weed eradication</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2006 Survey of CWMA Chairs in Nevada; n=19; mean value on a scale from 1 (less important) to 5 (more important)
Successful CWMAS

- Have a “champion” with energy, commitment, leadership skills and available time
- Share a common vision with clear and achievable goals and objectives
- Develop trust among members
- Members share responsibilities
- Build community support for weed management
Successful CWMAS

- Ignore jurisdictional boundaries
- Emphasize results
- Embrace change as priorities evolve (size, emphasis, constituents, etc.)
- A critical mass of participants and members; support for members to attend
Selecting a Leader

Leader must have:

- Dedication
- The ability to motivate group members
- Enough time to commit to the leadership of the group
- Administrative and facilitation skills
- Help from a vice-chair
“Just finding someone to lead and coordinate is extremely difficult.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers to Success</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate funding</td>
<td>78.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of manpower</td>
<td>57.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much land area</td>
<td>52.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate participation</td>
<td>52.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate buy-in among members</td>
<td>26.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of effective control methods</td>
<td>10.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many weeds</td>
<td>5.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of training and skills</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2006 Survey of CWMA Chairs in Nevada; n=19
Key Attributes Influencing Performance
(Hershdorfer et al., 2007)

Most important:
- Adequate funding
- Locally enforceable weed regulations (for weed districts)

Secondary:
- Interagency coordination
- Volunteer participation
Lemhi CWMA, 2009

- Annual **funding** became available
- Signed **participatory agreements**, with BLM, USFS, providing multiyear funds
- **Hired** a full-time County weed supervisor
- **Formalized duties** of steering committee in writing
Lack of group structure and identity
- Group not formalized with bylaws, MOU, etc.
- Formal leadership roles were not defined
- Unclear boundaries for WMA (no map)
- Lack of sustained funding, manpower, etc.
- Inadequate communication of progress and successes
Estes Valley Case Study (2007)

- Insufficient education and awareness events
- Decline in motivation – loss of sense of crisis
- Growing reliance on contractors (vs. personal responsibility)
- Lack of ownership
- Willing to abdicate responsibility to a county weed district
Common barriers

- Funding, including grants
- Recognition of group accomplishments

“...crucial to have sufficient funds so CWMAs feel they're doing something significant and effective.”

2010 Nevada CWMA Survey, n=12
Other barriers

- Geographic area (particularly in the west)
- Some areas are 10,000+ square miles in size
“One of the greatest barriers is that we are so scattered. People live far away from each other and have trouble staying cohesive. There’s a lack of guidance.”
Leadership

Burnout (both coordinator and members)

“Must have dedicated, passionate coordinators. We'd have to find another staff person with the passion, commitment and support of their agency to coordinate the group (if current coordinator quit).”

2010 Nevada CWMA Survey, n=12
“Without a coordinator working to keep things going, I'm afraid the group would fizzle. It's hard to get people to come together to meetings and probably wouldn't happen if coordinator didn't do a phone campaign the week before to get written reports or commitments from stakeholders.”
Elements of leadership keeping groups active in the long-term

- Communication
- Commitment
- Cooperation
- Determination
- Organizational skills
- Passion
- A focus on the end goals
- Fun – celebrating success

2010 Nevada CWMA Survey, n=12
Barriers to long-term success

- Time and knowledge

“If you rely on volunteers, they may not have the time, skills, level of commitment, or resources and experience to address all the needs of the group. Volunteers come and go, and can choose what they do and don't do. Most volunteers are not skilled in grant-writing and project administration.”

2010 Nevada CWMA Survey, n=12
Factors that will help overcome barriers:

- Recruit, train and support group leadership; share responsibilities
- Plan ahead for adequate and sustainable funding
- Provide sufficient public education and outreach to maintain a sense of urgency/need to manage weeds
Factors that will help overcome barriers:

• Maintain forums for sharing group knowledge and accomplishments
• Recognize geographic barriers to participation
• Share responsibilities to avoid burnout
• Have fun!
“It comes down to people showing up and being strong participants and leaders in the organizations. These numbers are few and seem to continue dwindling from year to year.”
Newark/Long Valley CWMA packing in sprayers on horses